

Third meeting of the Victim Service Coordinating Council

(March 29, 2007)

Present: Nancy Barton, William Bilton, Hope Blackley, Marvin Bryant, Barbara Grissom, Dean Kilpatrick, Surleaner Lakin, Ashlie Lancaster, BJ Nelson, Tricia Phaup, Bob Rightsell, Anne Wolf.

Absent: Vicki Bourus, Colleen Bozard, Dottie Cronise, Veronica Swain, Sandi Wofford (Dana will contact all of these persons to discuss implications of nonparticipation. Several had already contacted Dana in advance to discuss scheduling conflicts, and Dottie provided written comments on pending proposals because she was unable to attend).

Dr. DeHart provided introductory remarks regarding the consensus-building process, emphasizing the importance of VSCC members' active participation in meetings in order to advance shared goals.

Dr. DeHart provided an update on the VT restitution model from information provided by Judy Rex of the Vermont Center for Victims of Crime. Further information on the VT model, including detailed reports and legislation, are available from Dr. DeHart upon request. VSCC members expressed interest in finding out how VT funded restitution if payment was not contingent upon offender compliance. VSCC members noted that examination of restitution issues in SC would require identifying the universe of eligible cases and figuring out, of these, how many involved an order of restitution and what percentage of orders were paid. It was noted that there is at least one study of restitution in SC, one of which was through the Justice Fellowship. It was noted that a problem in SC is getting collected money to the victims, in that there is a diffusion of responsibility regarding distribution of funds. Problems in ordering, collecting, and distributing restitution prompted some discussion regarding utility of centralized administration. The issue was set aside for future deliberation.

The Safety & Accountability Audit workgroup noted that they have not elected a chair and are working from a consensus model. Their group includes private, nonprofit and public interests and diversity of perspectives. Their first meeting will take place the morning of April 5th. They have been gathering information from a Duluth guidebook, video, and online resources, and they have produced a summary of key concepts. They note that effective work on this task merits substantial staff time that is not available to workgroup members. Dr. DeHart suggested that the S&A Audit might fall under longer term goals and possibly be allocated specific staff support from the VSCC in the future. The notion of an S&A audit is to look at systemic and institutional responses to interpersonal violence in a detailed way, including looking at procedures, forms, networks, and so on. It is a complex system and the audit requires looking at all steps, preferably by someone with professional training. If SC could afford performing such audits, it would be a highly effective means of enhancing practice in various jurisdictions, providing a rich way to assess systemic responses and make a real

difference. Tricia is part of a 3-year national study of sexual assault cases involving assessment of Richland County cases, and this data will be available soon. Dr. DeHart indicated that she had attempted to get a slot in Duluth's next Safety & Accountability Audit training to provide information and resources with the VSCC [note: since the meeting, her participation in this training has been approved].

The Compensation workgroup had initially tackled four issues and has come to agreement on two of these. They have solicited input from persons in the field and refined their draft proposal accordingly, and they would still like to gather input from another source. The group also heard from SCCADVASA regarding changes in VAWA legislation that would impact the current compensation laws in SC. They have proposed legislative changes to address counseling needs of victims around key events and in cases of extreme trauma, as well as changes pursuant to the evolving VAWA requirements. There was some VSCC discussion around proposed changes, and refinements were suggested. It was noted that research findings using a model similar to that proposed had increased reporting rates, and that this model was growing ever more appropriate as technological advances altered the course of sexual assault arrest and prosecution (e.g., due to DNA evidence). The VSCC came to agreement that the workgroup should move forth in submitting the refined proposal for action. It was suggested that, if the legislation passes, the VSCC track effectiveness for a few years to assess whether additional changes are warranted.

Following a break, Dr. DeHart presented a national perspective on credentialing of victim service providers. The Standards workgroup presented draft legislation pertinent to certification of victim service providers, including those working in private, nonprofit, and government settings. A related change to legislation would codify the VSCC in order to define a multidisciplinary group to develop and oversee the certification model. There was some discussion of representation on the proposed VSCC, with concerns being addressed and general agreement regarding a refined description. There were lingering concerns about some other aspects of the certification legislation (e.g., grandfathering, location of administration, inclusion of nonprofits), however, and it was decided that VSCC members needed additional time to review the proposal and solicit input from colleagues.

Perry Simpson and Carmen McCutcheon of the Legislative Audit Council summarized key points of the LAC report on victim services. They noted recommendations that the VSCC take over duties of the (inactive) Victim Advocate Policy Committee, examine consolidation of victim service granting agencies, examine victim notification issues, and examine issues regarding expenditure of victim service funds. The LAC will conduct a 2-year follow-up of their report to assess whether recommendations have been implemented.

On April 5 (1p-4p), the VSCC will hold a meeting specifically focused on discussion of the Standards workgroup proposal.